giving. The level of giving is affected by a person's concern about the future, and the strong economy has reduced anxiety about the future,'' Erin says.

She points to the Independent Sector study, noting that people do tend to give more as their financial security increases. The decision to give is often influenced by whether individuals have sufficient disposable income. On a national level, this report indicates an increase in the percentage of respondents who reported giving a larger amount, up to 24 percent in 1999 from 21 percent in 1996.

While good economic conditions do make for better times in the non-profit sector, Joan does caution against a giver's income level as the sole organizations when identifying potential donors.

''What always surprises me is that I find those people who have less disposable income actually give a much higher percentage of what they have than those who have more,'' Joan says. ''That has taught me many valuable lessons, and I never make an assumption about whether someone may give based on income. I've seen studies that indicate people actually give more if they pay higher taxes rather than lower taxes, disputing the assumption that lower taxes mean increased disposable income for charitable contributions.''

So today, with the apparent plateau of economic conditions around the corner, should non-profits be concerned with declining contributions? Not necessarily. Erin says, ''People give to people. They give to local concerns or causes in which they have some connection. It's a personal decision.''

She notes that three factors generally influence people to give to charitable causes—being asked by someone, through participation in an organization or through a family member or relative. Even in an economic downturn, these personal factors are unlikely to change.

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FROM ONE SMALL SEED . . . . A SUPER BOWL SUNDAY CHARITY STARTED BY COLUMBIA YOUTH QUICKLY WENT NATIONAL

(By Margaret N. O'Shea)

The Rev. Brad Smith often thinks of the tiny seed he tossed into his senior youth group at Spring Valley Presbyterian Church in Columbia that winter Sunday nine years ago, because its phenomenal growth has changed his life and the lives of countless others. It was a simple line in a prayer: ''Lord, as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us to be mindful of those among us without even a bowl of soup to eat.'' But such seeds fall on fertile ground in the generous South, where people instinctively respond to a neighbor's need—or a stranger's—with casseroles and kindness.

Not even the sower could envision how that single seed would flourish. But youth in the church seized the notion and nurtured it. By the 1990 Super Bowl, they had mobilized it. By the 1990 Super Bowl, they had mobilized other young people in 22 Columbia-area churches to collect one dollar each and cans of food from worshipers as they left to go home, filling soup kettles with the donations for local food banks and soup kitchens. They scored $5,700 and vowed to top it the next year. They did . . . over and over again. In time, more than 125 churches in Richland and Lexington counties were familiar with the kettles and bowls used to collect donations, and churches in other states were borrowing the idea. In 1995, what the Spring Valley youth enthusiastically dubbed ''The Souper Bowl'' went national.

With its roots in midland South Carolina, it is today a charity branching nationwide and affirming the miracles that can occur when enough people give just a little. Last Super Bowl Sunday, it inspired people in all 50 states and Canada to toss $1.7 million into soup cauldrons at churches and community centers to help feed the hungry or meet other needs in their local neighborhoods. Now, every year while Americans are riveted on a football game that determines a national championship, more and more of them also focus, however briefly, on the Souper Bowl, which defines a national conscience. It is a simple way for ordinary people to make a difference.

The challenge has been to keep simple a sweeping movement that now has thousands of volunteers, at least 8,000 local branches, corporate sponsors and 10 professional football teams behind it, and high-tech support to keep track of donations. All the money remains in the communities where it is collected; local groups choose where to give the cash and food. Totals are reported to a phone bank in Columbia or logged on the Internet.

The numbers help participants see more clearly what their own contributions, however small, can do when added to others'. ''In an age when young people are bombarded with cynicism, it's important for them to know that by God's grace, they can make a difference in the world,'' Smith says. ''We are so divided as a country in so many ways. Republican and Democrat. Rich and poor. Black and white. Young and old. The Super Bowl is a rivalry. But our Souper Bowl transcends differences. It brings diverse people with different backgrounds, different opinions, different faiths, together for a common purpose, and together they make a tremendous difference. Just knowing that changes the way many of our young people choose to live the rest of their lives.''

On the Internet—and wherever the Souper Bowl of Caring, as it's now called, is discussed—the football images are tempting. Youth carry the ball. Donors score. Teams win. A youth group in Virginia is called for clipping after challenging their pastor to shave his beard when their collections reach a goal. Some churches blitz their communities with flyers and letters and phone calls. On the Web site, donated by South Carolina SuperNet, football icons offer links to a playbook, coaches' corner, player profiles, and a chance to score a touchdown on a hunger quiz. Prior years' statistics are retired numbers, of course.

But for Brad Smith, the mustard seed is the image to remember. He recalls the half dozen teenagers who showed up after school to brainstorm about the first Souper Bowl. Each had friends who attended other churches and schools and agreed to call them. One by one, those churches joined the effort. Later, as young people went away to college or moved to other cities, they would in the same way get their new churches involved in giving. Each year would bring younger brothers and sisters of kids who'd been involved earlier on, stuffing envelopes with press releases for out-of-state newspapers, making phone calls, manning the phone bank, distributing posters, holding the cauldrons.

When the Souper Bowl first began to spread to other states, it was still through the word-of-mouth concept. Pennsylvania, the state that always comes closest to South Carolina's contributions and once has even surpassed us, began participating after a Lutheran layman in his 80s heard about the program while vacationing in Myrtle Beach and took the idea home.

Laura Bykowski, a Spring Valley volunteer who ''retired'' from a marketing career to raise a family, has used her child's naptime to ply those marketing skills for the Souper Bowl. As a result, professional football players agreed to make public service announcements and nearly a dozen teams, including the Carolina Panthers and Atlanta Falcons, threw their considerable weight behind the Souper Bowl. National Football League star Reggie White and Campbell's Soup launched a nationwide promotional campaign, including radio ads, posters and a press conference in San Diego the Wednesday before the 1998 big game.

Columbian Jim Antley designed and maintains the Web page. Some 30 volunteers help enter data. Frank Imhoff compiled the database.

But it's still the energy of youth that drives the Souper Bowl of Caring. Local tradition is at least one all-night workathon, where young people gather at the Spring Valley church social hall to share pizza, watch a Monty Python movie, stuff envelopes and lick stamps until dawn. And youth make up the bulk of the volunteers who do the actual work on Super Bowl Sunday.

Last year, about a thousand churches and organizations used the Internet to report their donations, but seven times that number telephoned on Super Bowl Sunday, calling into a 50-line phone bank contributed by Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Other companies have offered support and expertise, usually because someone who works there has asked. Some communities get corporations to match what individuals give.

Yet, the focus remains small. The idea still is to ask for only a dollar, only a can of food. If the amount collected is only about what it takes to pay for a 30-second commercial in the televised football game that day, it is still a monumental blessing for the charities chosen to receive that bounty.

With the phenomenal growth of the Souper Bowl, its original organizers have insisted on maintaining the grassroots character. ''We believe the idea is a gift from God,'' Brad Smith says. ''It is our task to be good stewards of it.''

RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

HON. DAVID E. BONIOR

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 13, 2001

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, The Right to Organize is a fundamental right—workers fought, bled and even died for this right.

Workers organize because they want to ensure that their labor is valued . . . they want a voice at work.

About four years ago, we began working with the AFL–CIO to lend our voices as Members of Congress . . . to help build coalitions with workers as they try to organize.

As elected officials, we can join with clergy and other community leaders to ensure that workers have the freedom to choose to join a union.

That's what the 7 Days in June are all about.

We are here today to join the chorus of voices that says: 'Employer interference with workers' choices is unacceptable.'

This year's 7 Days in June . . . 9th through 16th . . . promises to be even bigger than last year when more than 12,000 workers, community leaders and elected officials participated in more than 120 events in 100 cities.

The participation in these events by Members of Congress is important—when we lend